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ABSTRACT

This document presents one in a series of twenty-three case studies derived from in-depth interviews using a sampling of former participants in the Mountain-Plains program, a residential, family-based education program developed to improve the economic potential and lifestyle of selected student families in a six-state area. Each case study contains the following information about a specific student family: biographical data; participation in the educational and community programs; home, income, placement, and employment data; stated problems and/or satisfactions; summaries of the participants' personal and social development; individual ratings of the program; scripts of personal interviews; interviewer comments; and individual test scores and self-assessments. This document presents specific findings on Ernie and Ilene Torres, a young Mexican-American couple with only a seasonal employment history. The follow-up study reports that both individuals completed occupational training in seven and a half months and are presently economically stable. (Names in these studies have been changed.) Two other documents are included in the series: a report which examines work and income variables for the group (ED 110 610) and a report which summarizes group findings on personal and social development (CE 014 681). Specific documentation for the instruments utilized in the study are included in both of these related documents. (BM)

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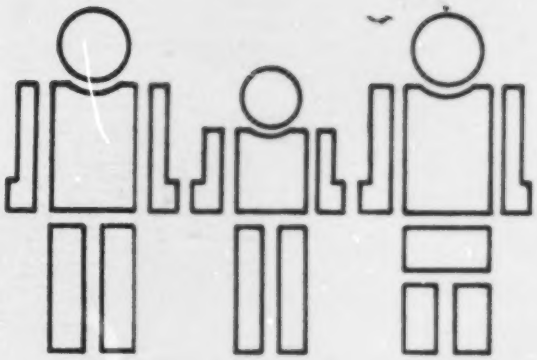

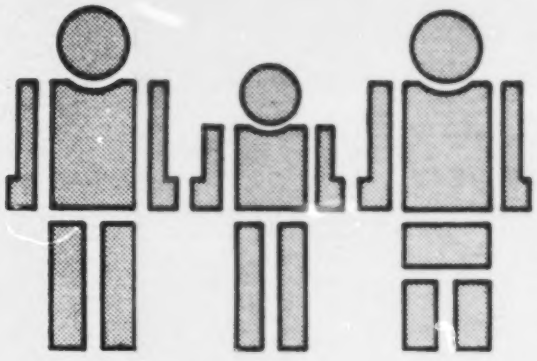

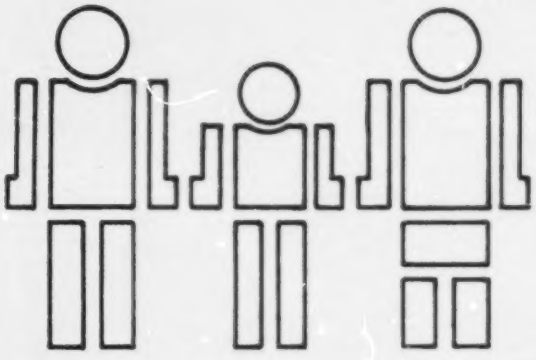

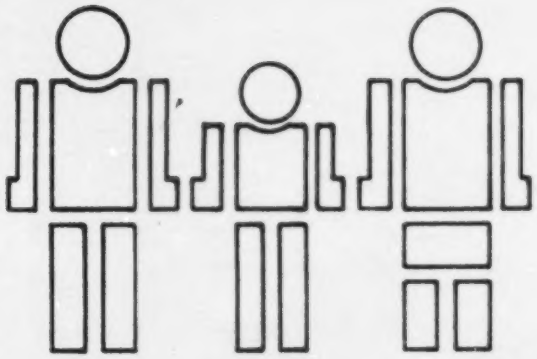

CASE STUDY REPORT #10

Ernie and Ilene Torres

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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CE 014 666

MOUNTAIN PLAINS EDUCATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INC.

CASE STUDY REPORT

ERNIE AND ILENE TORRES

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June, 1975

A Product of Research Services Division
David A. Coyle, Director

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PREFACE

Reports in this series are derived from in depth interviews using a stratified random sample of former Mountain-Plains students. Interviews were conducted from November, 1974 through January, 1975 by Mountain-Plains professional research staff. Case Study Report 1 examines Work and Income variables for the group. Case Study Reports 2 through 25 include specific findings on each family included in the sampling. Case Study Report 25 summarizes group findings on personal and social development. A summary of the research design for the Case Study Reports is documented in: Coyle, David A.; Conrad, Rowan W.; and Myers, Douglas D. In Depth Case Study of Exited Families: A Summary of the Research Design for Phase 1 Preliminary Effects Study. Glasgow, Montana: Mountain-Plains Press, 1974. Documentation for the instruments utilized in the study are included in both Case Study Report 1 and Case Study Report 25. All names in these studies have been changed.

Michael C. Fenenbock
Series Editor

David A. Coyle
Director, Research
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CASE STUDY

ERNIE AND ILENE TORRES

BACKGROUND

Ernie and Ilene Torres entered Mountain-Plains in March 1973. At their time of entry, Ernie was employed as a seasonal worker in the Parma, Idaho area and due to the temporary nature of his employment, felt his economic condition could be greatly improved if he had a well-defined skill rather than general labor potential.

The Torres' were young in relation to other members of the Mountain-Plains student population--Ernie 19, and Ilene 17. Ilene had no previous employment history due to her enrollment in high school, while Ernie had completed the 8th grade before entering the labor force. It is difficult to establish the family's pre Mountain-Plains income due to the seasonal nature of Ernie's work, but Ernie estimated an income total of $1000 for the 12 months previous to Mountain-Plains. The Torres' indicate they obtained no welfare benefits, and no food stamps during the year previous to entry. The Torres' also report having had no savings, no insurance, using no budget and, in general, not participating in the community. Further, they did not subscribe to newspapers or magazines and had no telephone in their home. Newly married--only a few months--the Torres' had not established a permanent household routine which may account for many of the above mentioned items, Additionally, due to their low income, many of these items would have to be classified luxuries.

Both Ernie and Ilene are of Mexican-American heritage and both had difficulties speaking and writing English. Although the family was young, they appeared to be very astute in realizing the dismal future they faced.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

At Mountain-Plains, Ernie chose engine repair as his career choice, and Ilene chose receptionist as her occupational choice. Ernie began work on his GED but failed to complete the requirements. Although he gave no reason for not completing, his Career Guidance Specialist indicated he thought the reason was Ernie's lack of understanding the English language. (During the course of the case study interview, both he and Ilene would often converse in Spanish.) Ernie performed work experience in a local Glasgow garage where his supervisor indicated that "Ernie was a very good worker--he should do real good if someone will give him a chance. He's a quick learner." The garage offered him a position, which Ernie turned down as he wished to return to Idaho. Although neither Ernie nor Ilene chose the highest career level in their respective fields, both were very realistic in the choices they made. Due to poor communication skills, neither would have been able to complete the course work necessary for validation in a higher occupational area.

PLACEMENT

Ernie and Ilene exited the program on October 1973--some 7½ months after entering. Both completed the program, Ernie in engine repair and Ilene as a receptionist. They returned to Idaho where employment was found immediately for Ernie at the Idaho Cylinderhead Repair Shop as an engine repairman

dealing basically with valve grinding. His wage was $416 per month. Ilene did not find employment until December 1973 when she was hired as a receptionist at the Prudential Claims Office in Payette, Idaho, first on a part-time basis and later as a full-time employee. She earned $277 per month. Ilene worked at Prudential for two weeks, and then one day simply did not return to work. The Idaho State Office discovered the reason for Ilene's absenteeism to be her difficulty in understanding her co-workers. She indicated "The people are all so much older than me and they talk too fast for me to understand." Although the State Office convinced Ilene to return to work and discuss the problem with her supervisor, Ilene prefered not to go back--she contacted her supervisor by phone and told him she would not be returning to work. As a consequence, the State Office contacted the Neighborhood Youth Corps to find temporary work for Ilene.

HOME AND INCOME

At six months post exit, the Torres family apparently had begun to establish itself at least in the economic sense. Ernie was still employed at Idaho Cylinderhead and had received a 10¢ an hour raise which resulted in a wage of $433 per month. Ilene had found employment with the Payette Housing Authority working as a secretary for $277 per month. This raised the family income to over $700 per month and $3200 for the six months since exit. They received no welfare benefits; however, they still had no investments, savings, or insurance, nor did they use any type of budget. They belonged to no community organizations and, with the exception of the monetary increase, their

life style was similar to that experienced before entering the program.

Employer evaluations for both Ernie and Ilene indicate that they are doing good work, have good attendance, and in general, their employers are quite satisfied. At the time of the case study interview, over one year had passed since the Torres family had exited the program. Ernie was still employed at Idaho Cylinderhead--now earning $503 per month. Ilene had changed jobs and was employed at the Central School earning $346 per month. This raised the Torres' monthly income to $849 per month. They still use no welfare benefits nor do they belong to community organizations. They have no savings, no insurance and have accumulated some debts since the previous interview. The Torres' debts are mainly focused in a car that they purchased for $1600 and a stereo and TV--payments for these items are $86 per month.

Their current dwelling is difficult to describe. They live in an apartment complex that faces an alley. From the shape of the apartment building it would appear that the units are converted garages. However, when entering the apartment, this impression dissipated as the room structure did not fit that of the typical garage. The Torres' apartment is small, old and extremely warm, well ordered but not overfilled with furniture. In a word--comfortable. On the first evening's interview, it was apparent that both Ernie and Ilene were "overdressed" for the occasion as both wore nice, and expensive, clothing--a satin shirt with French cuffs, pantsuit, etc. The second evening was considerably different (blue jeans and sweatshirts) which indicated to the interviewer the desire to make a positive impression by meeting

the unknown with the best foot forward. The casual attire the second evening indicated a relaxed realtionship which was much more conducive to this type of interview.

FAMILY STABILITY

During the interview, a warm relationship between Ernie and Ilene was apparent. They would often confer with each other to arrive at a mutual reply. Ilene did display some confusion over a number of questions which Ernie explained before she responded. This process did not seem to embarrass her or appear to be disruptive to the interviewer. Often she seemed to understand but was not sure of the exact meaning of the word. It was at these times that she would consult with Ernie. Ilene is very quiet and would not speak unless directly asked a question. It may be this shyness that has caused her employment problem as she may not have understood directions or she may have been unwilling to ask questions to clarify the misunderstanding. When the interviewer visited the place of Ilene's employment, she appeared to be embarrassed by his presence. Although she did not go to the extreme of hiding from him, she did very little to acknowledge his presence.

The Torres family have no children and Ilene did not appear to be pregnant at the time. At the time of the interview, Ernie was in the process of applying for a housing loan for new low income housing. He was extremely excited about this as he was just able to qualify without exceeding the income limit. As a result, the Torres' would be able to have a new home for the same price they were paying in rent for their current dwelling. Perhaps after

they establish themselves in this new setting, children will be more seriously considered. Again, these two individuals seem to relate well with each other. At no time did the interviewer notice hostilities on the part of either partner. If anything, the two greatly complemented each other.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

On the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, Ernie scored at the norm for self-criticism. He received a score above the mean in self-satisfaction (one standard deviation) and physical self (one standard deviation) and social self (one standard deviation). All other scales were at norm. The indication presented by his high satisfaction in the areas of self-satisfaction and physical self indicate happiness with the surroundings he usually finds himself in--work and home. The two scales that scored below the mean (behavior and social self) indicate his perceived inability to deal with other people. This perceived inability could be due to his Latin/American background. Born in Texas to migrant parents, Ernie, like most migrant workers, never had the opportunity to become integrated into a social setting at a local level. Constant movement precluded any type of social interaction. Generally, Ernie appears well-adjusted as his total score on the Tennesee Self-Concept Scale (340) would indicate. His large deviations above and below the mean can be related to specific social circumstances (group mean equals 349). Ilene scored quite low on the self-criticism scale (one standard deviation below the mean). This scale establishes the validity of the others. Ilene's low self-criticism score would appear to be in accord with her shyness. Her shyness would indicate a lack of aggressiveness which could be manifested in the formation of defenses regarding

her inability to deal with other people. (See Figure 4.)

Social perception scales indicated that Ernie and Ilene have somewhat naive perceptions of the world in which they live. (See Figure 3.) The Neal-Seemen Powerlessness Scale indicated that Ernie perceived he had more power than any group in the original sample and scored one standard deviation below (more powerful) his Mountain-Plains group mean with a scale score equalling one. This indicates Ernie feels he has the strong ability to influence the world in which he lives. Ernie received a scale score of two on the Srole Anomie Scale. This indicator contradicts his Powerlessness Scale score where Ernie actually exceeded the Mountain-Plains norm. The area that he displayed anomic reactions to were child rearing or family setting, and a general loss of paternal and social norms expressed by the statement "It's hardly fair to bring children into the world with the way things look for the future." The other area of Ernie's anomic expression was in his perception of immediate personal relationships, the very foundation of his social existence, as expressed by agreeing with the statement "These days a person doesn't really know who he can count on." These two indicators agree with the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale results and Ernie's low score on the social self measure. Both the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and the Srole Anomie Scale agree; however, the Powerlessness Scale indicates an uneasiness towards those around him while Ernie's high power score would indicate a belief that he had the ability to control the world in which he lives. The discrepancy between the scales may indicate a high level of indecision on his part. The erratic responses would support this hypothesis.

In some respects, Ilene was perhaps more realistic in her choice of responses. She received a scale score of 2 on the Powerlessness Scale, Slightly below (½ standard deviation) the Mountain-Plains group norm. She did, however, score a scale score of 1 (1½ standard deviations below the Mountain-Plains mean) on the Srole Anomie Scale. Although the Powerlessness Score was closer to the Mountain-Plains group norm, both were in the naive direction from their respective norms. Apparently, within her shell of shyness, she feels she has the ability to control her world--a naive perception.

Both Ernie and Ilene scored naively on both measures in comparison to either the Mountain-Plains case study sample or the original instrument sample. The reasoning for this is undoubtedly multi-fasic dealing with their youth and inexperience in the world they live in. Although their heritage would lead one to expect a feeling of hostility toward strangers, results of these scales, as well as personal observations, produce just the opposite reactions. The Torre's presented a very hospitable atmosphere during the interview itself and were most willing to discuss different personal questions concerning their satisfaction with Mountain-Plains. Employment may prove something different as the work difficulties of Ilene may have been caused by reluctance to express problems in the working environment. The security of their home may have lent something to the apparent openness, also the fact that the interviewer was not presenting a threatening force, allowed them to be more expressive, or anyway allowed Ernie to be more expressive.

EMPLOYMENT

All instruments were administered only on current jobs. (See Figures 1,2, and 3.) In Ilene's case she had been employed at a number of different jobs, but with the exception of her current employment, the jobs were either very short or temporary. Both Ernie and Ilene scored very low on the work alienation scale with each receiving a scale score of zero. The mean for Mountain-Plains exited females was .875, with Ilene registering below that. Ernie scored 1½ standard deviations below his group mean of 1.06. This scale would indicate that both Ernie and Ilene are currently happy with their work situation. The work motivation scale produced scale scores of 14 and 16 for Ernie and Ilene respectively. The group mean for departed females was 14.8. Ilene exceeded this mean by approximately ½ standard deviation. The group mean for departed males was 14.7. Ernie was slightly below the mean. Again, this scale would indicate a degree of job satisfaction. The Torres' mostly feel positive about their jobs, although the Job Descriptive Index revealed areas of dislike for both Ernie and Ilene. Ernie expressed the greatest dislike in his working environment to be his co-workers. This section of the JDI received a scale score of 12 which converts to the first percentile or the lowest score possible. The Mountain-Plains exited male group mean was 42. Thus Ernie was 2½ standard deviations below the group mean. During the course of the interview, the subject of Ernie's work situation was brought up. As related by Ernie, his co-workers played "practical jokes" on him with some degree of frequency. It became apparent that Ernie's co-workers often used him as the butt of a joke due to his heavy accent. This, as is apparent

on the JDI, has caused considerable discomfort and led to the resentment of his fellow workers. Other scales that fell below the group mean were supervision and work in general. Two scales exceeded group means--pay and promotions--however, Ernie's resentment toward the people he works with by far exceeded the highest rating on these two scales.

Ilene rated her work situation on the JDI much higher than Ernie. However, Ilene did rate the pay scale quite low. The pay section was rated on the 10th percentile for Ilene as compared to the 26th percentile for the exited female mean. The scale score was 7 as opposed to the group mean of 17.1--some 1½ standard deviations below the group mean. Her other scales all exceeded the group mean with the exception of promotions, which was slightly below the mean. Ilene's scale score for the work category was 44 compared to 33.9 for the exited female group mean. Her housework score rated at 45 in comparison to 29.7 for the group. The supervision scale score was 54 in comparison to 41.4 for the group and her co-worker scale score was 54 versus 43.1 for the group. As a result, the areas that Ernie felt were negative, Ilene found to be positive, with both having generally positive feelings towards the work they were doing via the Work Alienation Scale.

The Minnesota Satisfactoriness Scale was administered to the direct supervisors of both Ilene and Ernie. Ernie was rated overall below the exited group mean with a scale score of 61. The group mean was 68.5. As a result, Ernie was approximately ½ standard deviation below the mean score.

The performance scale was equal to the group mean. The others, including performance, dependability and personal adjustment, were all slightly below the mean. During conversation Ernie's supervisor made only one negative comment concerning Ernie's performance, and that was in relation to his initial speed at hire, however, his supervisor reported "presently he's doing real good." The MSS itself was scored virtually on the middle of the scale for all questions with the exception of performance, on which the supervisor inidcated that Ernie deserved a higher wage (be promoted.)

Ilene had an overall scale score of 66, slightly above the female group mean of 64. She was above the mean in the following areas: performance, with a scale score of 21 (one standard deviation above the mean of 19) and personal adjustment, with a scale score of 19 (one standard deviation above the mean of 16.8). All others were either on or below the means (none were one standard deviation below their respective group means). During the course of the conversation with her supervisor, it was clear that Ilene had made a favorable impression. Her supervisor made several comments to the effect that she wished Ilene had completed her GED (Ilene formally completed only the 11th grade) as she would "make a good teacher aide," but due to Ilene's lack of education she could not be considered for "that type of position." Her supervisor was interested in the type training Ilene had taken while at Mountain-Plains and was pleased to learn that Ilene was working in an area related to her training.

Although both Ernie and Ilene had areas of dissatisfaction, they appeared to

be, in general, content with their respective work situations. Ernie enjoys his work due to his opportunity to work by himself in a small operation that allows him to perform a variety of tasks. Ilene likes her work because she has the responsibility of production and "no one looks over my shoulder while I work." From both employers, there was virtually nothing but good reaction concerning the quality of Ernie's and Ilene's work.

RATING THE MOUNTAIN-PLAINS PROGRAM

The Torres family were in the program for some 7½ months before completing their occupational training. In discussing their impressions and reactions to Mountain-Plains, the Torres' were receptive and eager to reply to questions put to them. (See Figure 5 and Table 2.) When asked to rate Mountain-Plains as an influence in their lives, both said it was a positive force. When asked if they would enroll in Mountain-Plains again, both agreed definitely yes. Of all the areas at Mountain-Plains, the only one they felt was less than "much help" was Counseling, which both rated as of "little help." When questioned as to why Counseling was given a minimum rating, they indicated that it caused stress on their marriage. Further inquiries revealed the Torres' had been split in Counseling sessions and this caused considerable disruption. The Mountain-Plains area considered the greatest help was occupational preparation. Ernie declared that occupational preparation was the major reason for enrolling in Mountain-Plains, and that due to the good training received, he had realized this objective. Again, all areas except Counseling were rated as of "much help," including; Job Training, Math, English, Career Guidance, Work Experience,

Consumer Education & Budgeting, Community Development, Recreation, Health, and Home Management. When questioned specifically about job training, the only suggestion Ernie offered was for increased space and reference materials. Ilene felt that machine operation would have been useful. Both believed that Math and English preparation were adequate for their jobs. It is worth noting again that for the Torres family English is a second language. (As reported, it is suspected that Ernie did not complete his GED due to poor reading skills.) When asked if they would change occupational choices, Ernie replied that office work may be more interesting and Ilene felt that social and education services or a related educational field would fit her current interests.

When asked to complete a Developmental Employability Traits (DET) on how they perceived themselves both prior to program participation and currently, Ernie recorded improvement on every variable and Ilene felt she had improved on all variables with the exception of self-confidence, competency, and industriousness. (See Table 1.) Although they asked no questions, these ratings may be questionable as to the extent they actually understood the meaning of these categories. Questions dealing with life satisfaction indicated that both felt satisfied with their current economic as well as social situation. Both felt fortunate they had jobs and were in a position to buy a new home within the foreseeable future. When asked if they felt they could make their future what they wanted it to be, both replied they could by working toward their goals. They stated they were healthier now than before entering the program and that they were more confident in dealing with financial matters. Community responsibilities, the Torres' reported, were limited to not littering or in general marring the looks of the community.

FEMALE INTERVIEW

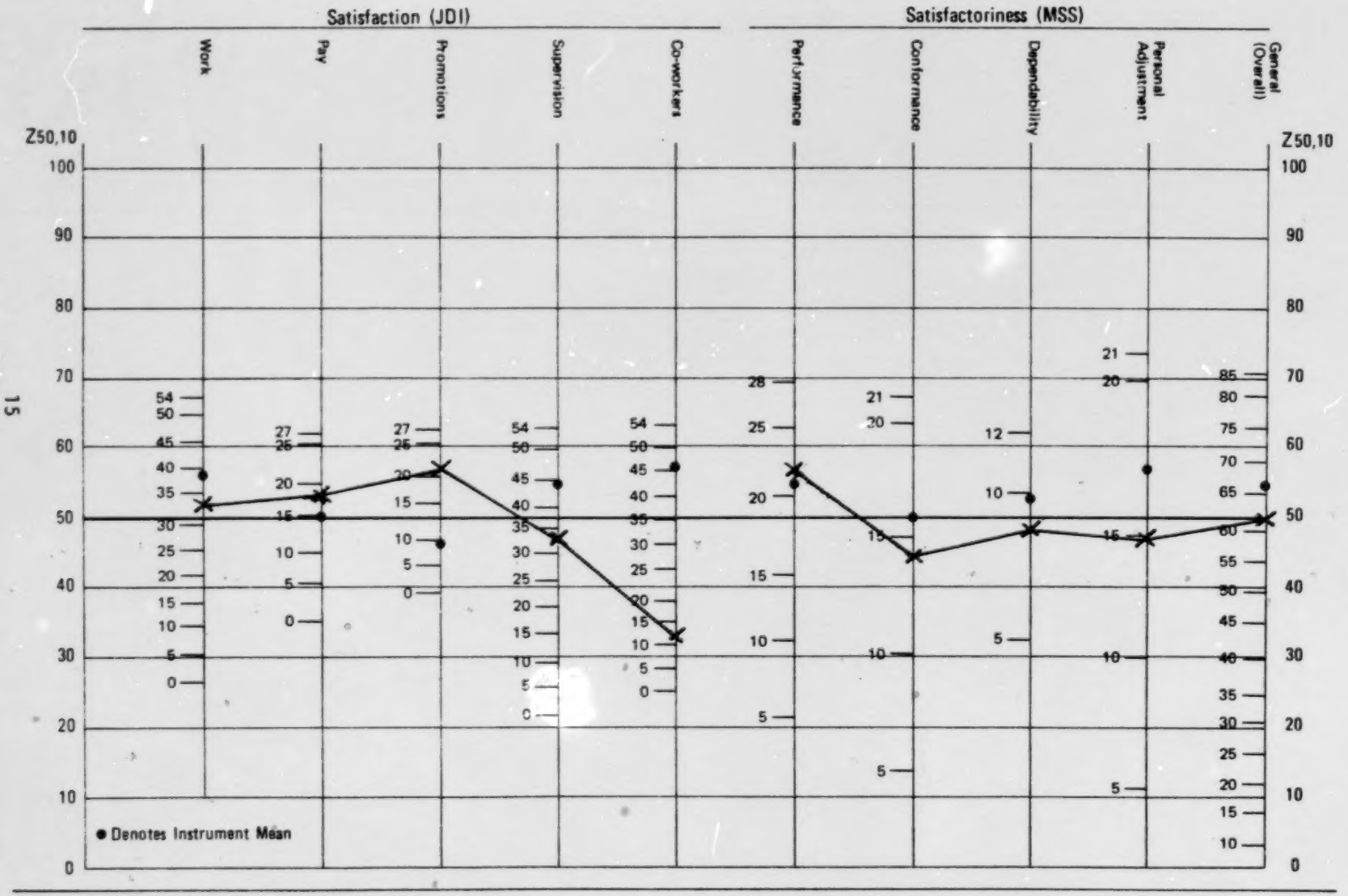
The section of the interview dealing solely with women was administered to Ilene without Ernie being present in the room. As indicated earlier, Ilene is shy, reserved and does not often speak first, but rather allows Ernie to lead discussions. The interviewer experienced some difficulty in encouraging Ilene to elaborate on the questions. Nevertheless the following items came to light: Ilene is very content with her perceived roles in life; she is satisfied with being a woman and takes pride in caring for her husband; she does not participate in women's clubs/associations and feels that she and her husband communicate well about problems that both face during the day. She also felt that the problems they face now are less severe than those encountered before entering Mountain-Plains; that previously monetary problems had been a major point of contention, whereas now the question is how to spend the money they have. In general, she appears to be happy in her life and would not like to take a more active role in the family, but is content to allow Ernie to make a majority of the decisions.

SUMMARY

Although the Torres family has made little apparent progress in becoming more active in the community, they do appear to be adjusted and content. They have moved closer to their parents and appear to enjoy spending a considerable amount of their free time with their parents. Although the family graduated from Mountain-Plains over a year ago, the only apparent changes that have occurred lie in a monetary setting. The Torres' marriage appears to be stable, and both partners appear to be close to each other in this relationship. Although not outwardly mobile, they are satisfied with the opportunity Mountain-Plains has provided.

Figure 1

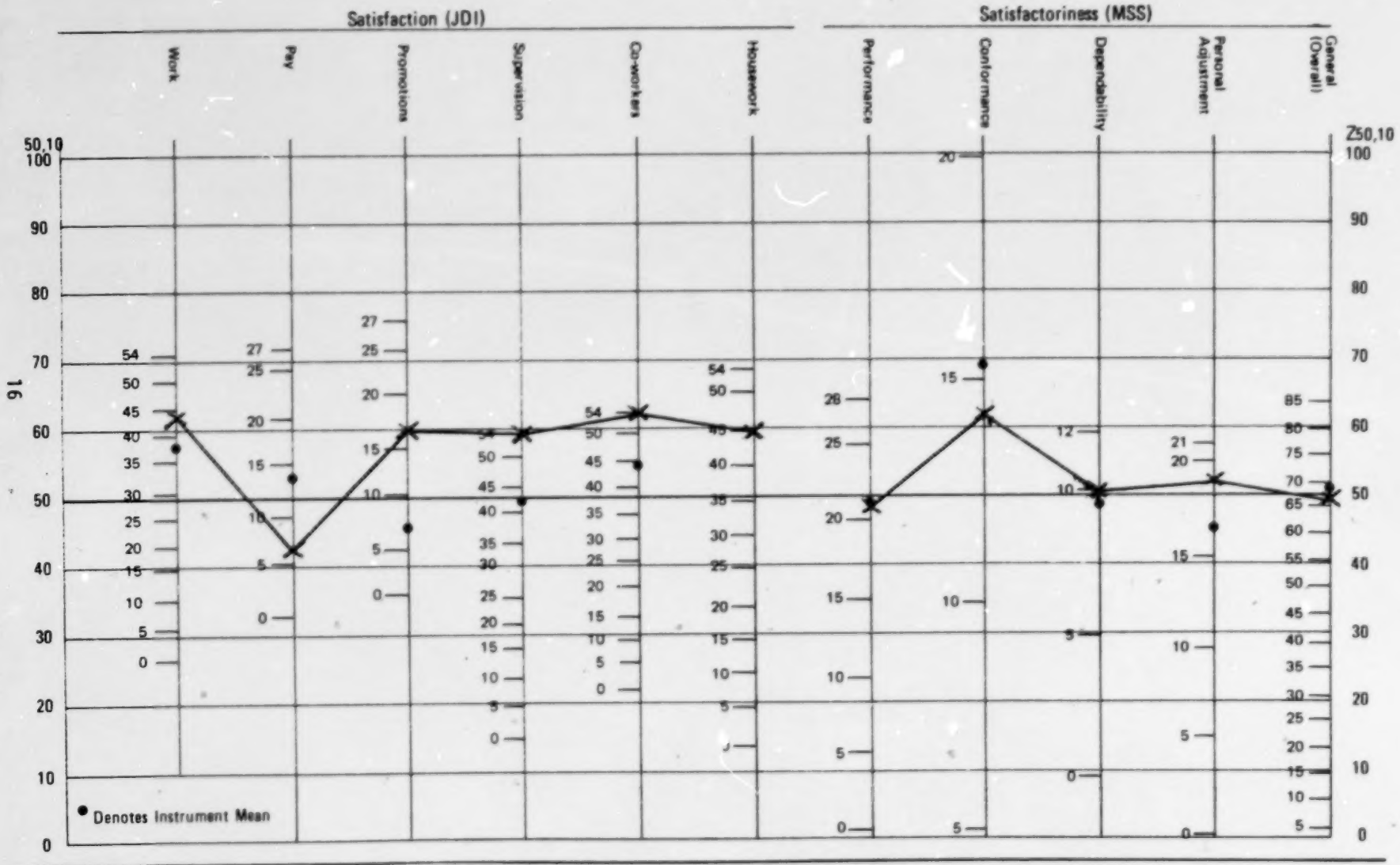
SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTORINESS – MALE



Note: Profile based on entering student scores.

Figure 2

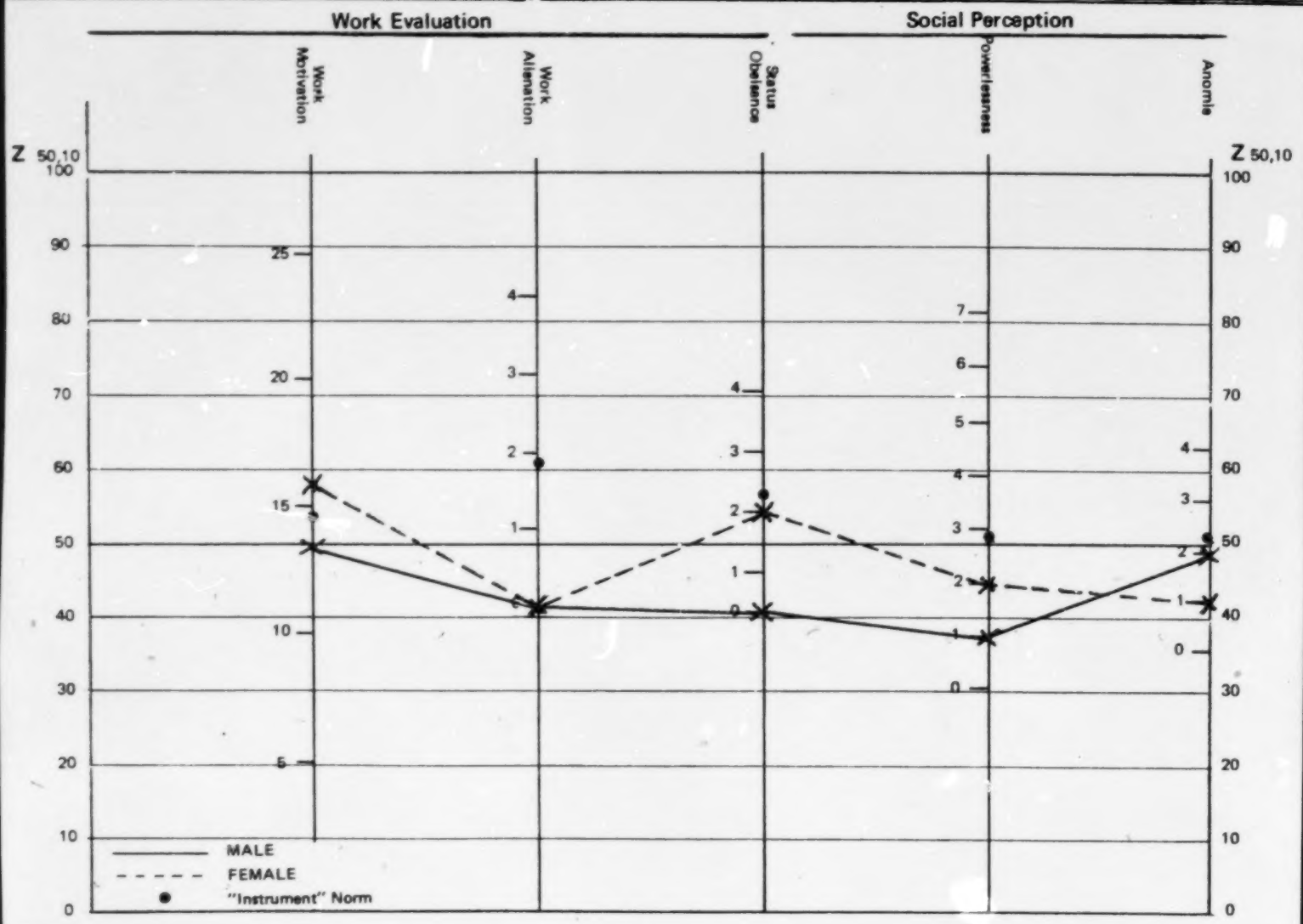
SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTORINESS – FEMALE



Note: Profile based on entering student norms except "Housework" which is based on instrument norm for employment.

Figure 3

MOTIVATION AND ALIENATION

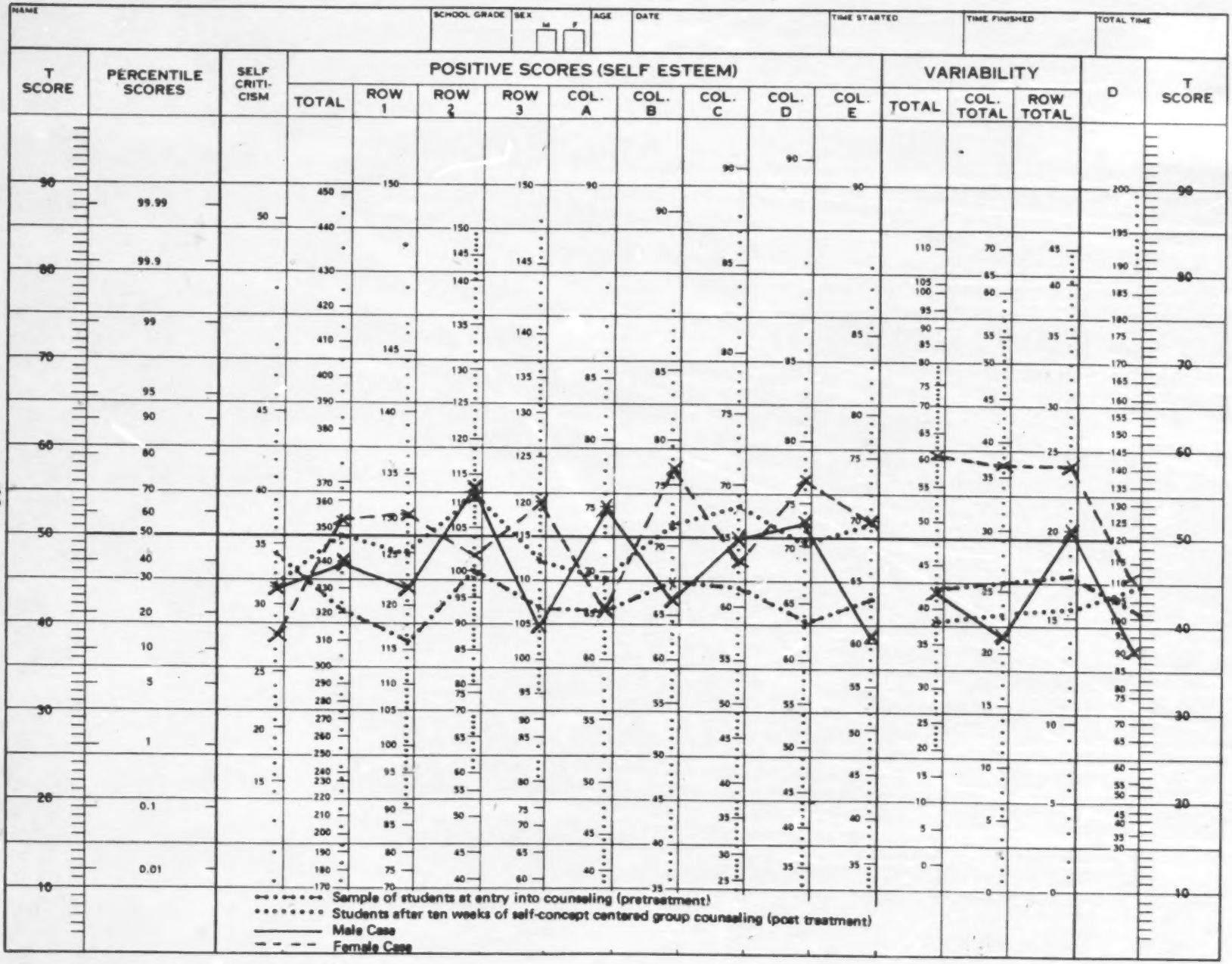


Note: Profile derived from entering student data.

Tennessee Self Concept Scale – Figure 4

PROFILE SHEET

Counseling Form



Note: This is the standard profile sheet for the TSCS.

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Male					Female			
High		Low			Low		High	
Much	Some	Little	None		None	Little	Some	Much
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Job Training	- - - - - - - - - - - -			●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Math	- - - - - - - - - - - -			●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			English	- - - - - - - - - - - -			●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Career Guidance	- - - - - - - - - - - -			●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Work Experience	- - - - - - - - - - - -			●
		●	- - - -	Counseling	- - - -	●		
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Consumer Education	- - - - - - - - - - - -			●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Community Development	- - - - - - - - - - - -			●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Recreation	- - - - - - - - - - - -			●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Health	- - - - - - - - - - - -			●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Home Management	- - - - - - - - - - - -			●
			NA	Early Childhood		NA		

FIGURE 5

UTILITY RATING OF MOUNTAIN-PLAINS PROGRAM ELEMENTS

TABLE 1

SELF RATING OF PERSONAL AND WORK TRAIT CHANGES

Male		Female	
Improved	Regressed	Improved	Regressed
Appearance		Punctuality	
Punctuality		Attendance	
Attendance		Self-Control	
Self-Confidence		Self-Knowledge	
Self-Control		Accuracy	
Self-Knowledge		Accepts Responsibility (tasks)	
Competence		Cooperation	
Industriousness		Perseverance	
Accuracy		Social Contact	
Accepts Responsibility (tasks)		Dependability/ Reliability	
Cooperation		Responsibility (personal)	
Courtesy		Ambition	
Perseverance			
Social Contact			
Dependability/ Reliability			
Responsibility (personal)			
Ambition			

TABLE 2

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. "Rate Mountain-Plains as an influence in your life."

	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
Male		o			
Female		x			

2. "Knowing what you know now, would you have chosen Mountain-Plains?"

	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Don't Know	Probably No	Definitely No
Male	o				
Female	x				

3. "What is your rating for your current life in general?"

	Completely Satisfied	Well Satisfied	Neither Extreme	A Little Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Male		o			
Female		x			

4. "Rate your success:

		Completely Successful 9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Completely Unsuccessful 0
The year before M-P."	Male Female	No Data Available.									
Now."	Male Female										
Five years from now."	Male Female										